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ABSTRACT

This study explored student teacher, intern, and beginning teacher journals for themes that might inform inservice and preservice teacher education programs. The journals of 58 teacher candidates and beginning teachers were read to identify themes. Then common themes were organized into categories and frequencies for each category were determined. Two groups comprised the population: (1) 14 teacher candidates enrolled in teacher preparation programs who were followed as student teachers or interns; and (2) 44 beginning teachers in Illinois and Wisconsin. Completing open-ended or semi-structured journal or log entries were requirements of both groups. Student teachers' and beginning teachers' themes were organized and information was reported based on several focusing categories. Among the student teachers' emerging themes included a personal sense of accomplishment, development, and excitement; steady construction of confidence; and a feeling of self sufficiency. A second theme of school interactions and relationships with staff also emerged. Beginning teacher entries were grouped by period of the academic year showing common concerns. Overall the journal entries revealed several common themes for both the student teacher and beginning teacher groups that may shed light on how best to design teacher education programs, field experiences, and support programs for beginning teachers. (JB)

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Preservice and Inservice Teacher Journals: What Do They Reveal?

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Preservice and Inservice Teacher Journals: What Do They Reveal?

The purpose of this study is to explore student teacher, intern and beginning teacher journals for themes. Knowledge of these themes will inform inservice and preservice programs.

Perspective

Reflection is an activity recommended by educators for educators through which one can learn more about their own practice and beliefs (Brandt, 1991). Schon (1983 cited in Pajak, 1993) describes an activity he terms 'reflection in action' as the process of "'thinking on your feet,' or thinking 'about doing something while doing it'" (p. 288). The purpose of this activity is to examine problems through a variety of lenses to become more "successful in solving professional problems" (Pajak, 1993, p. 287). Killion and Todnem (1991) expand on this theme identifying reflection on action, reflection in action, and reflection for action. Zeicher and associates refer to the reflection process as reflective action. For them the process "involves an active, persistent, and careful examination of practices and beliefs, including the grounds on which they are based and the consequences to which they lead" (Pajak, 1993, p. 291).

Reflection may occur utilizing a variety of vehicles including both supervisory conferences and/or journaling. One may also have a personal dialogue which is never articulated in a verbal or written format. For novice educators the journal is especially important. Colton and Sparks-Langer (1992) see journal writing "as internal dialogue with oneself. [Furthermore,] the journal is an intermediate step that leads to the development of new mental representations and metacognition" (p. 164). Another use for reflection is to assist teacher educators and supervisors in better understanding the trials, triumphs, and concerns of novice educators so that meaningful assistance may be offered.

Many researchers have examined novice teacher journals and described their journeys. Ryan (1992) describes the first year of teaching as a roller coaster and the teacher as needing to be a tightrope walker. Veenman (1984, cited in Kronowitz, 1992) reports "a review of 91 studies related to new teacher concerns" (p. 3) and the problems reported by new elementary teachers. Henry and Beasley (1989) list problems student teachers are likely to encounter while Caruso (1977) lists six phases of student teaching. Together these authors and researchers help develop a profile of novice teachers' concerns and developmental patterns. This study attempts to validate previous findings and uncover additional themes.

Methodology

This study will be utilizing content analysis to uncover themes in journals written by student teachers, interns, and beginning teachers who have worked with the researchers. Journals were read to identify themes. Then, common themes were organized into categories and frequencies for each category were determined.

Fifty-eight teacher candidates and beginning teachers were the participants in this study (n=58). The study was conducted in Wisconsin and Illinois. Two distinct groups comprised the population of this project. Fourteen teacher candidates enrolled in teacher preparation programs at one large and three medium sized midwestern universities were followed as student teachers or interns. Forty-four beginning teachers in Illinois and Wisconsin comprised the second group.

Completing journal or log entries were requirements for both student teachers and interns and the beginning teachers who were enrolled in a beginning teacher/mentor course sponsored cooperatively by the employing school district and local university. Journal entries were open-ended or semi-structured. Student teachers were given formats to complete entries for their university supervisor. Formats included requesting journal information relating to what they were teaching, planning, events of the week, and learnings or reflections. Semi-structured entries were completed by the beginning teachers for the course they were taking. These entries were directed by the following predetermined focusing topics: a) Identification of challenging situations experienced in the first two months of the school year; b) The new teacher/mentor relationship; c) Relationships with parents, students, and assessment; d) Growth over the year; e) Highlights of the year; and f) Topics of the beginning teacher's choice.

Findings

Findings are reported in terms of the two groups of participants: 1) student teachers and interns; 2) beginning teachers. Student teacher themes are organized and information is reported based upon categories identified by Henry and Beasley (1989). Also identified are emerging themes not found in the categories developed by Henry and Beasley. Beginning teacher themes are organized and information is reported based on the predetermined focusing topics. Responses to each topic are tabulated and reported. Then, respondent voices are heard directly. As Adler (1982) has stated, '...portrayals paint a broader picture'. Insights from participants themselves permit a picture or view of their personal perspective on professional development and growth over the semester or year. It is appropriate to 'allow the participants to speak for themselves'.

Student Teacher and Intern Journals

Henry and Beasley (1989) perhaps address problems of student teachers in the most depth providing a list of six areas with a multitude of subcategories depicting student teacher concerns. The student teacher logs examined in this study mirrored many of Henry and Beasley's categories which included: personal problems, school adjust-

ment, adjustment to students, extended schedules, instructional problems and lack of basic teaching skills. These categories are also frequently identified by other researchers. Also uncovered in this study but not reflected in Henry and Beasley's list were five additional themes: personal development, school interactions/relationships with staff, school interactions/relationships with students, parent interactions, and the value of journaling. A review of themes accompanied by the student teachers' voices follows.

Personal Problems

Henry and Beasley (1989) list personal problems as one area where student teachers may encounter challenges. Specifically they note economic concerns, family problems, feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, and immaturity. Student teacher and intern journals in this study revealed none of these themes.

School Adjustment

A second area identified by Henry and Beasley (1989) involves school adjustment. Areas such as stress including the feeling of "being unable to catch up" (p. 184), worry over possible failure, adjusting to the school, and problems of acceptable appearance are mentioned. Student teacher and intern journals in this study reveal no concerns related to appearance but overwhelmingly discuss stress, the potential of failure, and adjusting to schools.

I'm on an emotional roller coaster ride.

I spent most of my free time worrying.

I hope I don't become a basket-case as the subjects are added.

I'm already anxious about how I'm going to start teaching my first subject, and about when I'll have to be teaching an entire day. I know that's a long time away, but I can be a very anxious person.

I feel there just are not enough hours in the day or the energy to give a decent percent of myself. I get frustrated from being so worn out, because I feel like I'm not doing as much as I could be.

I get frustrated from being so tired at the end of the day and not feeling like planning or putting any more energy in when I come home at night.

I just feel so tense right now that every move I make in the classroom -- my future or chance of getting a job depends on it. ... I need to try to relax and enjoy myself more.

Here's my first impression -- middle school is bleak, kids are hopeless (so teachers tell me), teachers don't care, worksheets are the only teaching method, there is no continuity between subjects and no one can wait until

the end of each day.....
My head ached, my stomach was upset, and I felt like a visitor on a foreign planet where even my allies were semi-hostile.

Management, establishing rules, team-teaching, composure and self confidence are my biggest issues.

Adjustment to Students

The third area Henry and Beasley identify involves working with students - securing student acceptance and opposite sex attraction. Student teachers and interns did not identify opposite sex attraction as a concern, perhaps because they were working at the elementary and middle school levels. Student acceptance was a concern however.

When I reflect on a lesson the first thing that stands out is their [the student's] reception toward what I've been saying, particularly during discussion.

I am learning much about tough love... I don't need as much student approval now to be satisfied with my teaching.

I am finding students respect me more positively. I am giving myself more time at home to relax.

Extended Schedules

Taking additional college courses while student teaching, holding part-time or full-time jobs, and being involved in college activities are included in Henry and Beasley's definition of extended schedules. Student teachers/interns in this sample did not report these areas as problematic. However, balancing student teaching and the demands of being a parent were discussed.

My full week is coming up-- I need to find time to put the ideas together. I need time to catch up on my allied professional reports. I need time to put next week together. I need time to conference with my cooperating teacher. I need time to do my homework. I need time to start my resume and portfolio. I need time to do my laundry, kiss my kids, eat, breathe... Sometimes this is just a bit overwhelming.

Instructional Problems

Instructional problems are the fifth area discussed by Henry and Beasley. Concerns related to instruction include: adapting to the teacher's role, planning for instruction, teaching skills, motivating students, relating subject matter to pupil level, classroom management and discipline, and evaluation. Areas mentioned in analyzed logs include all of the above except teaching skills and evaluation.

Adapting to a teacher's role after spending so many years as a student can be

difficult. The mixed emotions caused by such a change can produce feelings of discontent and anxiety which may result in instructional problems. One student teacher shares a profound reflection:

> *Change is good. Change is scary. Remember -- no matter where you go -- you are there.*

Perhaps one of the most unexpected aspects of the teacher's role was the need for flexibility.

> *The classroom is very laid back, and once again we still don't have a set routine. And I don't see that happening this coming week either. Time, assignments, and scheduling have been basically mixed-up thus far. However, that's O.K. because I'm getting a good dose of reality and the need for flexibility with all the in's and out's of a classroom that barely leave time for actual teaching.*

> *Sometimes I have to remind myself to go day-to-day and step back now and then. I'm learning that flexibility and adaptability are extremely important to a teacher. Many times I'll plan something and will change it right before I teach or must skip it all together.*

Planning was a major theme for these particular student teachers and interns. They enjoyed planning, found it difficult and extremely time consuming, and were worried that their planning styles may not match those of their cooperating teacher.

> *Planning is beginning to overwhelm me. I slacked off for one week and spent all last week trying to catch up and plan for this week... I'm all caught up with planning, but I still feel like I'm drowning in paperwork... I feel like I've fallen and can't get up... I've learned my lesson and I'll never slack off again.*

> *I keep organizing and reorganizing and re-reorganizing. I've got folders and notebooks and bags and boxes and still I feel like I'm so spread out... I guess organization is the key.*

> *I'm realizing the frustrating constraints of a time factor. There's so much I would like to do, but it's just not realistic... I just feel frustrated like there's not enough time to really help these kids learn a topic before they need to move onto the next one.*

> *I've outlined and re-outlined and re-re-outlined my ideas... each day learning more about kids and learning.*

> *I came prepared to be alienated... both my cooperating teachers [at this placement] are very organized -- plan way ahead types -- naturally they'll want to see*

my plans and ideas ahead of time [that's not my style].

At times I struggle with the planning, but I'm getting better... It is work, but it is exciting as I near taking over full time.

Trying to put together a unit of study is a new adventure for me -- I like it, I hate It! So many decisions to be made. What is important to teach, how to teach it and keep it interesting. When to teach each element and keep it real.

Motivating students, perhaps the ultimate challenge for any teacher, is also a theme heard in student teacher/intern journals. This challenge may induce a personal initiative on behalf of the student teacher/intern to encourage individual students.

The students are finishing upon short term assignments and working on long term famous people reports, and it's hard to keep them motivated, because they know it's not due for a while.

The kids do not hand a lot of work in and I'm struggling with different ideas to try to motivate them.

Relating subject matter to pupil level was expected but still a challenge.

My lessons need to be more structured and the flow must be consistent... I also see myself doing more group practice from the book, rather than assigning it, because students are better able to comprehend this way.

I'm on my own [with the writers workshop]... I'm modifying the guidelines...we've got forty-two minutes and a rookie at the helm. We'll go a bit slower -the students will be my guide.

Lastly, classroom management and discipline were a concern for some.

The third-graders behaved well today, but I had to repeat a lot of things to them -- there was a lot of noise to deal with. I sent a student to the office. I warned him twice about goofing off and his teacher told me not to bother with it, so I had him leave and sit by the office.

I find myself saying over and over to them [the students] sit down, be quiet, close your mouth, pay attention...

I am really fed up with having to deal with all this... I am aggravated by the attitudes, mouths, and behaviors.

I never had a kid flair up like that; it causes a lot of thoughts to run through my mind. I really wonder what a teacher does when a kid refuses to do something...

Lack of Basic Teaching Skills

Oddly enough, a lack of basic teaching skills was not mentioned. One possible reason for this is that student teachers and interns were writing logs for their university supervisors who would ultimately be grading them. However, one intern reported that no curriculum was provided for his teaching assignment at the middle school. Therefore he experienced great frustration and felt his teaching was less than it could have been.

Emerging Themes

In addition to the themes identified by others in the literature, five more themes emerged with this grouping of student teachers and interns. Specifically, Personal Development emerged focusing on a personal sense of accomplishment, development, and excitement; a steady construction of confidence; and a feeling of self sufficiency. School Interactions and Relationships with Staff emerged as a second theme. Threads running throughout this theme included becoming aware of the positive and dysfunctional human dynamics associated with schooling, the need for teamwork, and a recognition of cooperating teachers being mentors. The third theme, School Interactions and Relationships with Students, was divided into three subcategories - Positive Interactions, Sharing Responsibility for Learning, and Encounters with Special Needs Students. Within these areas student teachers and interns explored concepts of teaming and growing as a teacher. The last two themes, Parent Interactions and Value of Journaling, explored out-of-classroom activities which were significant to them. A more comprehensive exploration of each theme and the student teachers'/interns' own words follow.

Personal Development

Student teacher and intern journals reflect a personal sense of contentment, accomplishment, development, and excitement. The classroom experience is unique in that it provides a hands-on placement to work through these feelings in a secure environment, in most cases, nurtured by cooperating teachers, supervisors, peers, and support staff.

I love my placement. I actually feel like I'm doing something... I am excited about the teaching duties and feel confident in front of the class.

I am pleased as punch to be here. My school is a friendly place and my cooperating teacher is a dream come true.

I'm so happy and enthusiastic. I just love it.

School consumes about 90% of my time and I love it.

Student teacher and intern journals also reflect a steady construction of confidence within many aspects of the school culture.

I feel confident teaching and I am learning day-by-day -- I'm enjoying everyday more and more.

I've been very pleased with my progress... I'm feeling in control when I'm supposed to be, this makes me very happy.

I enjoyed what I was doing and felt rewarded and a sense of accomplishment.

I was satisfied with what I had planned and the amount I had planned for each segment.

It's been hard work. My class is a family. This semester has been the best challenge of my college years even though I've worked harder than any other semester.

I am reflecting on the past few months and I feel I have come a long way.

This stream of positive emotions provides a promising substrate for self-sufficiency in future classroom interactions.

I'm proud of myself at this point and feel completely confident and competent in my abilities to start teaching in the Fall.

I will concentrate on a positive attitude. I have lost some of my excitement the last couple of weeks, but I hear this is normal this time of year.

I love learning from these kids -- I know they love to teach me.

My special activity for the week turned out great.

I love to teach math and I know it shows because my kids tell me how challenging and fun I make it.

Overall, everything is going great.

I launched an innovation of the book... We had a terrific class.

School Interactions and Relationships with Staff

Within the school climate, student teachers and interns became aware of the human dynamics associated with schooling. They recognized the need for teamwork and valued it.

I assist everywhere possible when L. is teaching--we often work as a team.

I am realizing how well we work together [cooperating teacher and student teacher] to meet our common goal of educating the kids to their highest capabilities.

I like how she [cooperating teacher] uses me as her confidant and how we really try to work things out as a team.

Everyone was very open and willing to share ideas or help me when I get my own classroom.

I learned that if everyone works together we accomplish our common goal with efficiency and proficiency.

In order for a goal to be accomplished, teamwork is the key.

However, teamwork is not necessarily the norm across all schools or with all teachers. Staff relations can prove to be more complex and enigmatic; fear and distrust can be an undercurrent in many cultures.

I attended a first-grade 'roundtable.' In theory, ideas are shared and teachers work together to promote learning. In reality, the ideas shared were not tied to any particular content, and the teachers were at so many different places in their philosophies, methodologies, and curriculum that anything beyond 'cute' was too big of a risk to share.

Is staff dissension a common reality which should be anticipated by the student teacher? Perhaps it can provide a candid model of dysfunctional behavior in the teaching profession which should be resisted and treated therapeutically if it evolves.

In a faculty meeting I realized that with any larger number of people there will be disagreements and tension, and even though I hear some back-talking and back-stabbing, the faculty did remain pretty open and flexible, so it was good for me to see this kind of reality.

I find myself avoiding the lounge because of the negative comments said about the kids and other faculty.

Regardless of its common occurrence, disagreements can lead to isolation from the peer group and separation from potential collegial support.

Some people insist on secluding themselves from the staff and some animosity is evident.

At a staff meeting I was very discouraged when a teacher stood up and said 'Is this almost over, I have things to do.'

I look back... Could have done more to change things... I've learned a lot about compromise this semester. That's what I mean by survival. Conflict exists very much for me here. It is a conflict between a stifling, joyless education and a creative, joyful one. Interested children are not discipline problems. The children here are wonderful.

The relationship with the cooperating teacher becomes one of mentor. For the student teacher/intern, this is only a brief glimpse into the realities of the classroom, so the guidance of the cooperating teacher is much appreciated.

Her positive, light attitude is helping me to become more flexible.

I am really learning lot from my [cooperating] teacher who is very professional and well prepared.

My teacher is wonderful and I admire her flexibility which is a necessity with this type of class.

Likewise, a positive relationship with colleagues can give student teachers and interns an extra boost in adjusting to the school. This association may also provide the means for sharing unique instructional methods or personal teaching experiences.

I enjoy my school a lot. The staff is great, fun, and very helpful. The kids are neat and I love getting to know them.

This school does such great things for their kids. They have a really motivated staff who goes out of the way for the students.

I sat in on a staff meeting; I like how comfortable I felt and how relaxed the atmosphere was... I'm starting to feel really at ease with much of the staff and I think they feel the same.

I attended a meeting with some other staff. It was a great experience to see the other side of people.

School Interactions and Relationships with Students: Positive Interactions

Teamwork can be a proactive measure toward building positive student interactions. Student teachers established a personal bond with their students through many activities such as playground and bus duty, learning activities in the classroom, one-on-one activities, extracurricular programs, field trips, and others. These activities set the foundation for a professional, and yet very positive, cohesive relationships with students.

I've learned that many of my students have troubling backgrounds. I try to make a positive comment to every student everyday. I've also learned that they are very creative and good thinkers.

As the classroom composition matures, the satisfaction increases for teacher and students. Within this lens, a student teacher/intern can seize the proverbial teaching moment. Journal entries reflect this concept:

I'm quite involved in the classroom and couldn't be happier.

This week has been jammed with learning form the kids; listen to them, they'll take the lesson into their own hands and make it meaningful for them.

Spontaneity can lead to a satisfying interim from a full schedule as student teachers learn to relax and appreciate the natural continuum of learning.

They [students] love it when a lesson revolves around my photos and experiences because we converse rather than speak and listen. They love to ask questions and I love to answer them.

This gregarious climate can provide a practical opportunity to integrate academic skills within pro social interactions. When teacher and student 'click', a personal satisfaction can be noted.

I'm learning that these kids need me and I was placed here for a reason. The kids are really opening up to me and I can see that mutual respect has been earned.

I'm becoming so comfortable with the school, staff and kids that I'm never going to want to leave.

After school my kids were begging me to say and I was wishing so much that I could.

School Interactions and Relationships with Students: Sharing Responsibility for Learning

As the student teachers become more acquainted with the students, the class environment evolves toward cooperative group activities, everyone working together and accepting responsibility.

I found myself trying new activities with these kids because they love new ideas and are very willing to try anything I give them.

Kids come up with wonderful ideas, it's scary but fun to give them the power to control the lesson with their input - they like it too.

I am trying to use Social Studies to help the kids be responsible for their own learning. We are working on note taking and reading for detail.

For Monday I'm planning to have the kids run the class. I'm dividing the kids into groups of four to five. They will each be finding different things about a certain Native American Tribe.

School Interactions and Relationships with Students: Encounters with Special Needs Students

As the only student group specifically mentioned, special needs students in the classroom provided a catalyst for student teacher/intern journal reflection.

I truly understand that these kids have had rougher lives than I can imagine, and that not all E.D. students are bad. I'm not trying to push them along and have them carry around the E.D. label which probably makes things worse. But I do not feel like dealing with their behavior for the rest of my teaching career.

I'm dealing with three or four E.D. kids. I understand their rights to be in the regular classroom, but what happens to the 'regular' kid's rights when most of the time is being spent settling down the disruptive E.D. kids?

One student didn't have his medication today and was a little crazy. I didn't feel like dealing with him today, but I know it's not his fault. Sometimes I have to remember that.

My first week was one of adjustment: getting to know thirty-one students, nine of whom are L.D., five ESL students, and two chapter one.

Despite their amazement at the behavior and number of special needs individuals in their classes, most student teachers/interns accepted these students and readily assisted them with compassion and understanding.

One boy comes to us from the CD classroom each morning. The class has not singled him out. He's just another first-grader who happens to stay with us only in the morning.

On Thursday I discovered a pattern of behavior which is a little disturbing. An ADD student in our class constantly doesn't have his work done on time... I'm going to try to work hard to keep him on task and make him care about his work.

I had a constant interaction with the students, helping them with assignments and answering questions. I saw more E.D. students act-up than I care to, but that in itself was beneficial to my learning the ins and outs of being a teacher.

The cooperating teachers' response to special needs students can provide a functional pattern for student teachers to emulate, in most cases commingling empathy with pragmatism.

> *I've seen my [cooperating] teacher deal with parents of an L.D. student and handle it wonderfully.*

> *[My cooperating teacher] and I had a brief meeting with the school psychologist about a boy in our class with some emotional troubles. We are having conferences with the mom to let her and her son know that we care; we're in this together.*

Parent Interactions

Student teachers and interns tended to be apprehensive about parent contact. This trepidation may have been based on rumor or comments heard at a teacher in-service on parent contact. Fortunately, most worries were unfounded and the cooperating teachers' model of professionalism was much appreciated.

> *I can only imagine what will happen next week when we have to meet with a parent of a 'gifted' child to determine what will please them. It bewilders me how a parent like this one can get away with almost harassment of a teacher. I think I have an invaluable placement here because I'm seeing real professional teacher-life outside the classroom. I can only hope to handle situations as well as my cooperating teacher.*

> *It's sad to see some of their behaviors at seven years old, and I fear for them as they grow up. Most of the time I just want to ask some of these parents what they're doing in terms of their child's discipline and needs.*

> *I attended a meeting with a student's parents, the GT [gifted and talented] coordinator, principal, and my cooperating teacher. These meetings are showing a whole new side of teaching. I am preparing myself for a positive parent teacher conference and when that is entirely impossible, I am learning steps to protect myself, such as logging and photocopying.*

A professional relationship between teacher and parent can be grounded in the collective needs of educating the student to his/her highest potential. Student teachers/interns discovered many resources for establishing this alliance such as parent teacher conferences, open house, and Market Day.

> *[I sat in on] a parent- teacher conference... it was a good meeting.*

> *Open house was a time to meet and greet parents, help alleviate fears, and reassure. It felt good to be able to reassure the parents that their child is doing just fine and offer suggestions to foster literacy at home, it felt so professional.*

I have found that being involved in Market Day and other school activities has made it easier to meet with some parents. I also attended an awards ceremony. This was an excellent opportunity to meet parents and other teachers.

Value of Journaling

Student teachers and interns also took the opportunity to reflect on the value of keeping a journal. This exercise was generally found helpful and was enhanced when the university supervisor responded regularly. However, other student teachers or interns felt journaling took time away from teaching.

The value of the log is in terms of putting down my thoughts and then sharing them with my supervisor to gain feedback and suggestions. [The student stated that when the supervisor did not get to write a response in her journal, she was missing something.]

Keeping a journal took time from lesson planning...

It's easier to talk than to write [journal entries]...

One student teacher also used the journal throughout the semester as a vehicle to express personal feelings about teaching and school. The journal was decorated with pictures of children found in magazines, with the facial expressions reflecting the words used to describe personal reactions and experiences.

Beginning Teacher Journals

Questions directing the journal entries of beginning teachers and new teachers to the district focused on identification of challenging situations experienced in the first two months of the school year, the mentor-new teacher relationship for those in a mentoring program, relationships with students in terms of assessment, grading, conferences with parents or family, reflections on growth and highlights of the year, and topics of choice significant to new teachers at the end of the school year.

Beginning Teachers Speak: September-October

Fifty percent of new teachers reported in September and October of 1991-92 that the pressure of beginning the year, learning district resources and curricula, making decisions about instruction, student needs, assessment, and evaluation were the most significant challenges. Approximately 30% of the new teachers indicated significant challenges in developing their own role as teacher, expectations for the year and understanding the expectations of colleagues and administrators. Orientation to district procedures and classroom management were also cited as significant challenges. Several teachers mentioned organizational abilities as a personal challenge. Approximately six teachers wrote about being overwhelmed with teaching, the amount of work and stress, and questioned whether they would remain in the profession. New teachers

assigned to mentors agreed that they received assistance and support.

In their words new teachers reported their greatest challenges to be:

...knowing course content and curriculum, creating a relevant lesson is my greatest challenge

[pressure of year beginning] ...Just having a friend that can be called on to air a difficult day or to vent some frustrations is health for a new staff member. Anxiety and beginning something new go hand in hand. It is beneficial to have someone you can trust....Walking into a new system is pressure ridden.

...putting up bulletin boards, making a list of things needed, continue to organize materials...

Setting up a classroom was somewhat of a challenge for me...

Students...outright refusal was something I had never encountered. I refused to get into a confrontation.

Wow. What a loaded question!! The first and probably the biggest adjustment I had was to change grade level...also the different learning levels [of students].

Learning how to requisition supplies...not having supplies readily available...organization! Next year should be a lot easier.

Moving into a brand new building...deciding on the best place for materials; also, learning to work with a partner [in terms of goal setting, flexibility].

Most challenging was getting to know and meet students, finding out their abilities and needs.

Finding the time to read files, to contact parents, to contact past teachers, to socialize with coworkers, to relax, and to get organized. I am the type of person who needs to be organized or I get frustrated. Boy was I frustrated!!

How can I accomplish everything!! I'm wondering if I can survive at this - if teaching is for me!

The biggest challenge was following in someone else's position. I've kept my own identity, but it hasn't been without a struggle.

DEAR JOURNAL: What did I get myself into? The beginning was chaos!

Beginning Teachers Speak: November - January

At the middle of the year, late November through January of 1991-93 25-40% of the new teachers wrote in journal entries that they recognized personal growth in several areas including: knowledge of student needs and abilities; instructional resources including use of a wider variety of lesson formats; better organizational skills; interpersonal skills with parents, students, colleagues, and administrators; and knowledge of district procedures and daily routines. Fifty percent recognized growth in self-confidence and the ability to define their role as teachers. Most of the beginning teachers had moved beyond survival issues in terms of teaching. They did discuss the need to learn to balance personal life with work.

New teacher comments regarding Students and Personal Growth included:

My organization and my lessons are better.

My confidence is better.

I believe letter grades are more powerful that satisfactory/nonsatisfactory grades.

I know my students' abilities and materials better.

I love teaching!

I'm better at balancing my life my work.

I can use my sense of humor.

I've become more assertive.

Grades can be demeaning. I developed my own grading system.

I'm more aware of student diversity and needs and what students face outside of class.

I can better define my role as teacher.

I struggle with student individuality and course standards.

I've faced the issue of being young and having parents accept me professionally as a capable teacher.

I'm focusing more on students as well as the curriculum.

I'm still dealing with management issues.

I'm being more relaxed with myself and my students which allows me to enjoy the teaching aspect more.

Beginning Teachers Speak: February - April

By Spring 1992 and 1993, new teachers focused largely on personal growth in terms of positive relations with colleagues and success experienced with individual or groups of students. Seventy percent wrote about positive relationships developed with staff, and 55% wrote about success with students. Success with students dealt mainly with interpersonal relationships, better management skills, clearer expectations, and a wider variety of instructional strategies and materials. Thirty percent attributed professional growth to the district new teacher course content.

The last journal entry of the year gave new teachers the opportunity to share reflections on a topic of their choice. A wide variety of topics were mentioned in journals. Twenty-five to 30% of the participants discussed district support as evidenced by orientation procedures and the new teacher course. Opportunities to share with colleagues through mentor relationships and with others in the new teacher course were cited as contributing to positive growth. Some new teachers discussed friendships developed with other colleagues as significant in their personal growth.

There was a definite shift from survival issues and anxiety with beginning a new job and a new school year to an outward view toward student, parents, and other colleagues as the year progressed. Most of the journal entries reflected a development of self-confidence and growth professionally and personally. In the spring a majority of new teachers wrote about planning for next year. All the new teacher participants stated that they would be willing to assume a role in assisting other new teachers.

On Reflections, Highlights, and Topics of Choice new teachers said:

I was pleased to be able to help and to see change.... [Comments regarding student abuse and student struggles.]

I've really grown...I'm like a coach.

I feel part of a team.

I appreciate the district support and positive climate! [This comment was stated by over 80% of the district new teachers.]

I'm looking ahead to next year - goals, successes, new curriculum. [This comment was made by several new teachers.]

I'm pleased the kids have chosen to work with me.

I've seen student success and growth in positive attitudes.

I've experienced parental support.

This is the first time I'm enjoying what I'm doing.

Things are more familiar.

I'm learning to balance my life and work. [This comment was made by several new teachers.]

I look to students and to teacher empowerment.

I'm looking forward to my new school and to getting married.

Summary

The participant voices heard via journal entries reveal the common themes existing for both the student teacher/intern and the beginning teacher groups. Both groups wrote about the newness of the year/semester with the resulting anxiety and pressure. Both groups addressed the role of teacher, discipline, setting expectations, and classroom management. Instructional strategies, lessons including "hands-on" activities and resources were topics mentioned. Growth in self-confidence and competence were shared by student teachers, interns, and new teachers.

The majority of participants expressed positive feelings toward making journal entries. Several student teachers and interns qualified their opinions with whether their supervisor responded to journal entries. Both groups expressed interest in being asked to express themselves. It provided the opportunity to think through issues, their feelings and reactions to experiences. One student teacher stated that having to write in a journal took time away from lesson-planning. Several provided fewer entries toward the end of the semester. One person in the new teacher group did not complete a journal. Three new teachers made briefer entries toward the end of the school year.

Conclusions and Implications

1. Time is needed for student teachers/interns and beginning teachers to feel comfortable teaching.

Beginning teachers and student teachers/interns share many similar challenges and accomplishments. Initial entries from beginning teachers closely reflect themes identified by Henry and Beasley (1989) and voiced in journals analyzed in this study. Emerging themes identified in this study more closely resembled entries made by beginning teachers in the middle and end of the school year. Perhaps this can be attributed to state mandated 18 week student teaching requirements as opposed to more typical 10-14

week college semester assignments. Longer student teaching experiences might help student teachers move beyond survival issues to functioning as confident professionals who enjoy their work.

2. A sense of belonging must be developed.

Mentoring and feeling a part of a team is important. Student teachers and interns repeatedly commented on how they and their cooperating teachers acted as a team. Beginning teachers mentioned the importance of "just having a friend that can be called on." Working as a team is not necessarily easy, the relationship must be built: 'My greatest challenges were..."learning to work with a partner."' Once relationships were built, they were perceived as vital: "I feel part of a team" "I appreciate the district support [providing this mentoring class] and positive climate!"

3. Beginnings are stressful!

Time is too short. Organizing materials and planning for instruction consumes all available energy and more. Recognition and communication of this fact may relieve stress as teachers, student and beginning, recognize that others are feeling the same way.

4. Provide an experienced guide to help with technical details.

Beginning teachers report learning district procedures, curricula, and acquiring supplies are a challenge. Student teachers and interns did not report similar concerns. One reason for the difference may be the presence of the cooperating teacher who is already familiar with district and building procedures. If this is so, beginning teachers may be helped by being assigned a mentor who will help in these areas.

5. Journaling can be a valuable communication tool for both beginning teachers and student teachers/interns.

Journals can provide opportunities for interaction between mentors and mentees and student teachers/interns and cooperating teachers or university supervisors. Although some respondents felt that journaling took too much time, others did not.

6. Journaling can provide continuous quality improvement data.

Journals can be utilized as a program, not personnel, evaluation tool by both employing districts and universities. By examining journals for themes, school districts can continue funding successful practices such as new teacher mentoring programs, can identify and address systemic problems, and can identify other areas for inservice opportunities. Universities likewise can identify successful practices, areas where program graduates are feeling challenged or inadequately prepared, and areas to be addressed at the graduate level.

7. The amount of structure associated with the journal is relatively unimportant.

Structuring journal entries does not appear to be an issue. Similar themes emerged from the beginning teacher journals which were organized around focusing questions and student teacher/intern journals which were more open ended.

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